Marple, PA – Representative Joe Sestak paid a heartfelt tribute to Americans who have been held as prisoners of war or who are currently missing in action at a solemn ceremony on September 21, 2007. This service, held on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, was hosted by the Marple Veterans Committee and the Marple Newtown Combined Veterans Alliance. — "We are here to commemorate the bravery of our countrymen who endured so much to protect our nation," commented Congressman Sestak. "Today, 88,000 servicemen and women remain missing in action from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Iraq and other conflicts of the last century. The sacrifices of those were captured and those who remain missing will not be forgotten."

Joe quoted POW Admiral James Stockdale who said, "I never lost faith in the end of the story, I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end..." When asked about who didn't make it out, Stockdale responded "Oh, that's easy, the optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, 'We're going to be out by Easter.' And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart." It is from this, Congressman Sestak said, Admiral Stockdale's philosophy as a prisoner of war has much to inform us about life itself: "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality."

With elected officials, veterans and former POWs in attendance, the ceremony opened with a bugler sounding Colors and a Pledge of Allegiance. Guest vocalist Michael D'Annunzio sang the National Anthem, followed by an Invocation delivered by Navy Commander Richard Butler, the Command Chaplain for NAS Willow Grove.

Representative Sestak, a former three-star Admiral who served 31 years in the Navy, said it was his honor and duty as a Congressman to recognize captured and missing servicemen and women. "Our obligation to American veterans cannot be understated," he stressed.

The service also included a wreath-laying ceremony by the Marple Veterans' Committee. Cdr. Richard Butler delivered the benediction and Michael D'Annunzio led the crowd in singing "God Bless America." The Rifle Squad saluted deceased service members, and the bugler played Taps. The ceremony closed with the retiring of the Colors.

"This was a beautiful and fitting tribute for National POW/MIA Recognition Day," said Congressman Sestak. "My heart goes out to these servicemen and women and their families."